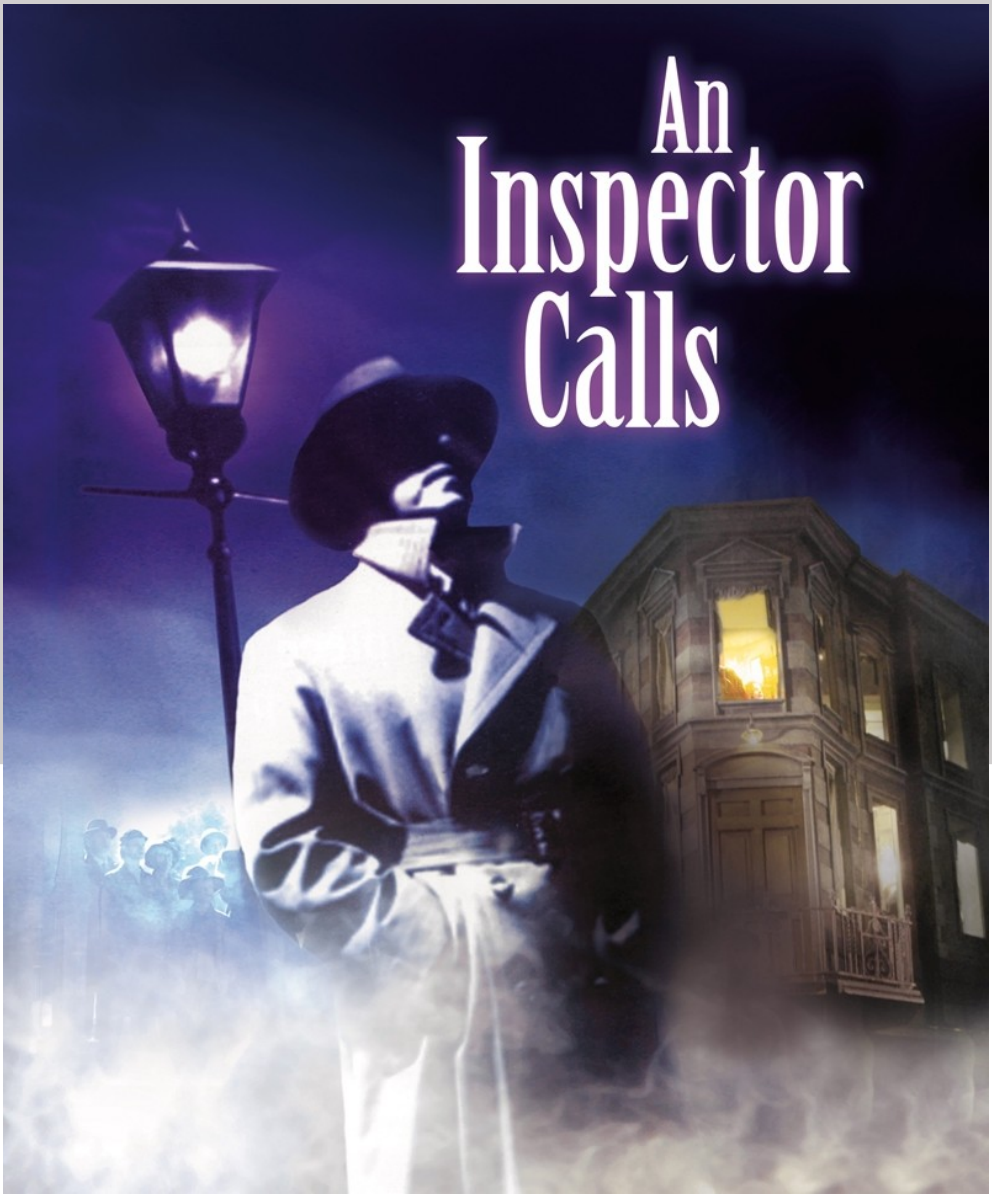
AN INSPECTOR CALLS

J. B. Priestley

English Literature Paper 2 Section A
Section A: Modern Drama



Name:

English Teacher:

Plot summary: What happens in *An Inspector Calls*?

Revision activity

- Go through the summary lists below and **highlight** what you think is the **key moment** in each Act.
- Then find each moment in the **text** and **reread** it. Write down **two reasons** why you think each moment is so **important**.

Act One

- The Birling family and Gerald Croft are celebrating Sheila's engagement to Gerald.
- Mr Birling makes pompous speeches outlining his views on the advances in science, new inventions and the relationship between bosses and workers, and saying they should ignore the 'cranks' (p. 10) who claim everybody has a responsibility to care for everybody else.
- The evening is interrupted by the arrival of a police inspector named Goole making enquiries about the suicide of a young woman, Eva Smith.

- Shown a photograph of the girl, Mr Birling admits he employed her in his factory but sacked her for being one of the leaders of a strike for higher wages.
- Sheila and Eric both feel their father has acted harshly, while Gerald supports Mr Birling's claim that he acted reasonably.
- Sheila is shown the photograph and she realises that, driven by jealousy and ill temper, she later had the girl sacked from her job as a shop assistant.
- When Gerald hears the girl changed her name to Daisy Renton, his reaction shows he too has known the girl.
- The Inspector suggests that many people share responsibility for the misery which prompted Eva Smith/Daisy Renton to end her life.
- Left alone with Gerald, Sheila warns him not to try to hide anything from the Inspector.

Act Two

- Gerald admits he had met Daisy Renton in the spring of the previous year and that she was his mistress for six months.
- Sheila is hurt and angry at Gerald's involvement with the girl, yet she feels a certain respect for the openness of his admission.
- Mrs Birling tries to bully the Inspector and to control events.
- Sheila realises that the Inspector's enquiries are well founded, and that her mother might also have had some dealings with the girl.

- While Eric is out of the room, Mrs Birling is forced to admit the girl asked for the help of a charity that she worked for and was refused.
- It is revealed that the girl was pregnant, and Mrs Birling lays the blame for the girl's death on the father of the unborn child.
- There is a suspicion that Eric might have been the father of that unborn child.

Act Three

- Eric confesses that he got the girl pregnant and that he stole money from his father's firm to support her.
- Learning that the girl had appealed to his mother for help and been turned down, Eric blames his mother for the girl's death.
- The Inspector makes a dramatic speech about the consequences of the sort of social irresponsibility that Mr Birling was preaching at the end of the dinner.
- The Inspector, having shown that each had a part in ruining the girl's life, leaves.

- Between them Gerald and Mr Birling gradually prove that the man was not a real police inspector.
- A telephone call to the Chief Constable establishes there is no Inspector Goole on the police force.
- A telephone call to the Infirmary reveals that there has been no recent suicide.
- Eric and Sheila continue to feel guilty about what they have done, but the others now shrug off any guilt.
- Mr Birling answers the telephone: a young woman has just died on her way to the Infirmary and an inspector is on his way to make enquiries.

CHARACTER QUOTATIONS

(This will help you remember that Eric and Sheila are <u>not getting married!)</u>

You're unlikely to remember whole paragraphs of text – like this one! Don't forget this: the shorter the quotation, the easier it will be to remember in your exam. Highlight or underline the key point in this paragraph to prove you know what you're doing before you start the next activity.

Top Revision Tip:

<u>Please also remember to:</u>

- Make sure your quotations are <u>relevant.</u>
- Use inverted commas to show it's a quotation: like 'this'.
- <u>Always</u> include page numbers (so you can find it later!).
- Copy each quotation **<u>exactly</u>** as it appears in your book.

What is Mr Birling's role in the play? Try to include contextual factors.

	Adjectives:	**Quotes:**
*During his **interrogation,** Arthur Birling is presented as...*		

	Adjectives:	**Quotes**
***After the Goole's departure** Arthur Birling is presented as...*		
	Adjectives:	**Quotes:**
*At the **dinner party** Arthur Birling is presented as...*		

Quotes

What is Mrs Birling's role in the play? Try to include contextual factors.

After the Goole's departure *Sybil Birling is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes**
At the ***dinner party*** *Sybil Birling is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes:**
During her ***interrogation,*** *Sybil Birling is presented*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes:**

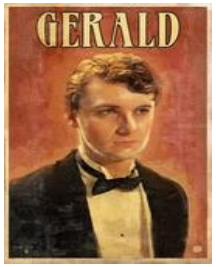
as...		

What is Eric's role in the play? Try to include contextual factors.

After the Goole's departure *Eric Birling is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes**
*At the **dinner party** Eric Birling is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes:**
*During his **interrogation,** Eric Birling is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes:**

What is Sheila's role in the play? Try to include contextual factors.

After the Goole's departure *Sheila Birling is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes**
*At the **dinner party** Sheila Birling is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes:**
*During her **interrogation,** Sheila Birling is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes:**

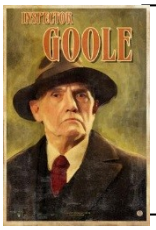


What is Gerald's role in the play? Try to include contextual factors.

After the Goole's departure *Gerald Croft is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes**

*At the **dinner party** Gerald Croft is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes:**

*During his **interrogation** Gerald Croft is presented as...*	**Adjectives:**	**Quotes:**



What is Inspector Goole's role in the play? Try to include contextual factors.

How is the Inspector shown as…	**Method:**	**Quotes:**
	Physically strong?	
	Verbally powerful?	
	Powerful to others?	

How does the inspector feel about…?	**Character:**	**Quotes:**
	Mr Birling	
	Mrs Birling	
	Eric	
	Gerald	
	Sheila	

THEMES

A theme is:

A central idea in a piece of writing:

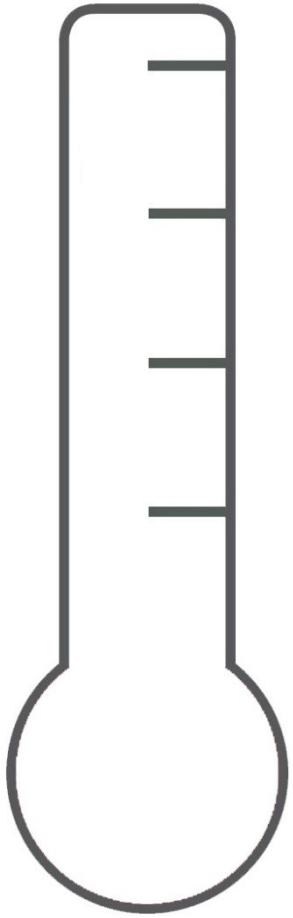
"The theme of desperation is found throughout his novels."

Can you match these key themes to the images?

- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Social Class
- ✓ Deceit/Lies
- ✓ Social Responsibility

Who is the most socially responsible?

Write the characters in order of most to least.



Define the theme:

Why did Priestley care about it?

Key Vocab
E.g. Marginalised

Social Responsibility

'But the way some of these cranks talk and write now, you'd think everybody has to look after everybody else as if we're all mixed up together like bees in a hive...'

Act 1 (p168)

How does Priestley explore social responsibility through Gerald Croft?

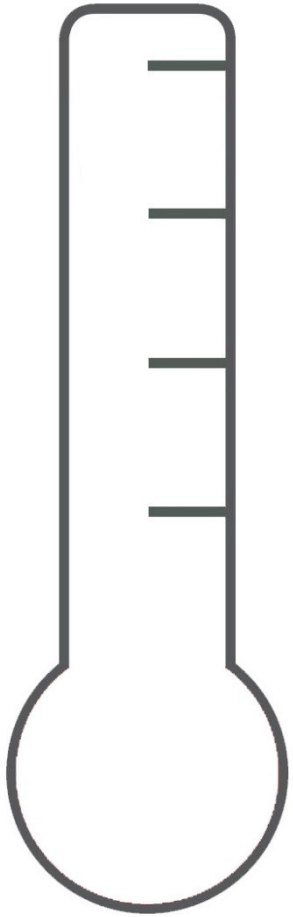
Evidence:

How does Priestley explore social responsibility through Inspector Goole?

Evidence:

Who is comfortable with the idea of deceit and lies?

Write the characters in order of most to least.



Define the theme:

Deceit and Lies

Key Vocab
E.g. Immoral

Why did Priestley care about it?

SHEILA [*half-serious, half-playful]:* Yes – except for all last summer, when you never came near me, and I wondered what had happened to you.

GERALD: And I've told you – I was awfully busy at the works all that time.

Act 1 (p162/163)

How does Priestley explore the theme of deceit through Eric Birling?

Evidence:

How does Priestley explore the theme of deceit through Mrs Birling?

Evidence:

Define the theme:

Age

Key Vocab
E.g. Generation

Why did Priestley care about it?

INSPECTOR: *'...We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they wull be taught in fire and blood and anguish.'*

Act 3 (p207)

How does age impact on the beliefs and attitudes of Sheila Birling?

Evidence:

How does age impact on the beliefs and attitudes of Gerald Croft?

Evidence:

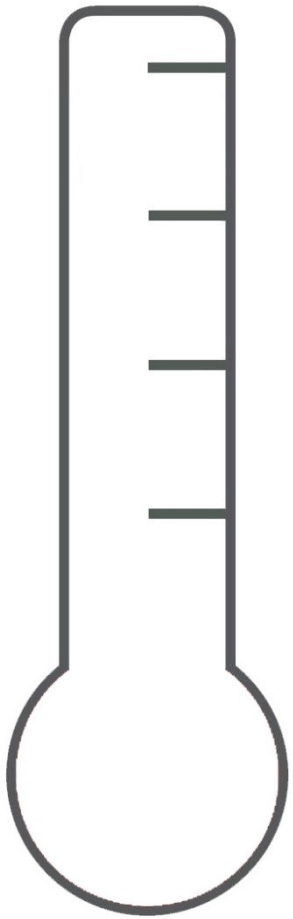
How does age impact on the beliefs and attitudes of Mr Birling?

Evidence:

Place each character on the thermometer based on how supportive they are of the concept women being inferior.

Define the theme:

Why did Priestley care about it?



Key Vocab
E.g. discriminated

Gender

"I hate those hard-eyed ***dough-faced*** women" (p.189)

"Girls of that sort" (p.199)

"clothes mean something quite different to a ***woman"*** (p.168)

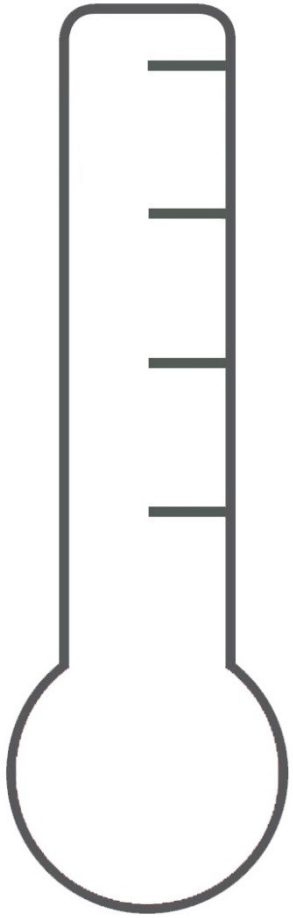
How does Priestley explore social responsibility through Sheila?

Evidence:

How does Priestley explore social responsibility through Sybil?

Evidence:

Place each character on the thermometer based on how important social class is to them!



Define the theme:

Why did Priestley care about it?

Key Vocab
E.g. hierarchy

Social Class (class war)

"Girls of that sort" (p.199)

"very good chance of a knighthood" (p.167)

"Surely you don't mean Alderman Meggarty" (p.189)

How does Priestley explore social class through Arthur?

Evidence:

How does Priestley explore social class through Inspector Goole?

Evidence:

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

(Stop booing – the more you practice, the easier it gets!)

Take a moment to really think about this…

Imagine you're a musician, and you've studied sheet music for hours and hours. You've copied the music perfectly into your own notebook in six different colours. You turn up to the concert that night, expecting your guitar solo to be sensational. Guess what? It's an absolute disaster.

Why did this situation end so terribly?

_____

_____

How could this embarrassing scenario be avoided in future?

_____

_____

How is this anecdote relevant to your revision?

_____

_____

Let's start at the start...

How do I write an essay on *An Inspector*

Unlike the other Lit. questions, you will be given two questions to choose from: one on character and one on a theme. **You only need to complete one.**

Choose your question by asking yourself which one could you write most about, in most detail.

This is essential knowledge.

This is learning how not to hold your guitar backwards.

Skip this part, and you'll look foolish on stage.

Character questions could be phrased any of the following ways:

- How is X presented?
- How and why does X change?
- What is the role of X in the play?

They all mean the same: what is the character like?

You should spend about five minutes planning in the exam:

- Step One: what is your answer? In other words, what will your conclusion say?
- Step Two: what happens in the play to support your opinion? **Choose 3 main ideas.**
- Step Three: What are the key quotes from these scenes?
- Step Four: What (thematic, historical, biographical) contextual links can I make?

Theme questions could be phrased any of the following ways:

- How important is the idea of...

You should spend about five minutes planning in the exam:

- Step One: which theme is being asked about? What is the definition of this theme? This is your introduction.

- Step Two: choose two characters to write about. Remember, you should try to look at both sides of the argument.

- Step Three: What are the key events and key quotes to write about for each character?

- Step Four: Why did Priestley write about this theme? What biographical historical, social and political importance did it have to him?

<u>Learning Check:</u> Read quick and answer with a tick!

✓ **Let's practise planning: What is Gerald's role in *An Inspector Calls?***

1. How long should you spend on planning?

- Step One: what is your answer? In other words, what will your conclusion say? **What is Gerald's dramatic importance? What idea does Priestley explore through Gerald? What is the audience supposed to think about Gerald?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

- Step Two: what happens in the play to result in you having this opinion? Choose three main ideas to write about. **There are three stages to the play – choose an idea to explore from each or (higher set pupils) try to track an idea across all three.**

- Step Three: What are the key quotes from these scenes? **Use your character pages to help you choose at least two quotes per idea.**

- Step Four: What (thematic, historical, biographical) contextual links can I make? **Where can you refer to context? Make sure you note this next to your ideas.**

Idea:	Evidence (2+):	Contextual links:

- Step One: which theme is being asked about? What is the definition of this theme? This is your introduction.

_____

_____

_____

_____

____

- Step Two: choose two characters to write about. Remember, you should try to look at both sides of the argument.

- Step Three: What are the key ideas and key quotes to write about for each character?

Character:	**What do they show about this theme?**	**Key idea 1 and evidence:**	**Key idea 2 and evidence:**

- Step Four: Why did Priestley write about this theme? What biographical historical, social and political importance did it have to him?

_____

_____

Inspector Calls?

We know how to hold the guitar of Literature.
Now let's learn a few tunes…

1. **You should write a brief introduction where you show your knowledge of the whole play focusing on the character / theme you're writing about. For example,**

Eric is the son of wealthy Arthur Birling and set to inherit the family's misfortune. However, he leads a hedonistic lifestyle and the play explores the result of this lack of responsibility and heightened entitlement. Therefore, through the character of Eric, Priestley explores themes of…

2. **You should write a WEAR segment for each idea. Aim to explore a range of quotes and track idea across the text. For example,**

At the start of the play Eric shows a sense of compassion with the working classes…. However, we see him treat Eva with utter disregard… The reader however has to question his motives for asking Eva to marry him… At the end of the play, we see that social class…

✓ <u>At the end of each segment you should make a clear link back to the question!</u>

3. **Write your conclusion: sum up the points you have made and finally give your opinion.**

Take a look at this sample essay which received a level 4 from AQA.

Candidate 3

At the beginning of the play, Sheila is presented as a delicate, subdued and proper young lady who is quite fragile. Her fiancée Gerald asserts that Sheila should be left out of the investigation as it would be 'unpleasant and disturbing' for her, suggesting she has pehaps not been involved with 'unpleasant' bussiness before as she has lead a very sheltered and comfortable life in her upper class family so far, or that she doesn't have the stomach for matters beyond her usual day to day life. The other characters in the play pity her and feel she is a bit pathetic and perhaps unimportant they treat her like a child saying she's had a 'long exciting and tiring day' and wish to dissmiss her, showing they have no real respect for her as a character.

However, as the audience, we start to see subtle hints that there is more to Sheila than the other characters seem to percieve. When trying to object to Gerald about what he was doing the last summer, Priestly writes that her tone should be 'half serious, half playful' indicating she may know more than she lets on to, or that she has a stronger opinion she feels she can't express. This appears to be down to her situation within the family, that nobody there truly respects her, and also at the time of the play is set, in the early 1900s, the fact that she was a women meant her opinions would more than likley be dissmissed, so she remains subdued.

Once the Inspector has arrived, however, Sheila starts to assert herself more. When Gerald suggests that she leaves, she tells him 'I'm staying', and even calls him a 'fool' when Gerald suggests they try and keep his affair with Daisy Renton secret. The turning point for her character seems to be when the Inspector exposes what she did to Daisy Renton. Originally she 'gives a half-stifled sob, and then runs out,' the reaction the audience was probably expecting from the way she is first presented. Then she returns and confesses the whole story and promises she'll 'never, never do it again'. The Inspector bringing out this story has exposed her temper and true nature to her family and fiancée, so after that, there is no point in Sheila putting up pretences and hiding her true feelings. This is why she changes after the inspector arrives and why she stands out as different from the family; she is the first to be exposed and therefore the first to accept responsibility for her actions and feel remorse.

By the end of the play, Sheila has completely changed from the character first presented. Originally she wouldn't express herself, by the end she is contradicting her parents as well as trying to bring to their attention the fact they should have learnt something; Sheila has really matured and opened up as a character. In the final scene, Priestly's note on the tone of her voice is 'passionatley', a stark contrast to the beggining. She points out to her parents that they 'began to learn something', but that they stopped. She recognises the fault in her parents thinking and expresses herself on it. The guilt of her part in the girls death and the realisation of her responsibility in the matter caused Sheila to open up and stand up for herself. The Inspector's visit changed her viewpoint on matters, and by the end she has changed to become a strong and forthright woman.

L4 AO1 effective use of references.

L4 AO2 clear explanation of writer's methods.

L3 AO3 some understanding of implicit ideas.

L5 AO1 apt reference integrated into interpretation.

L5 AO1 thoughtful response to task.

AO1 Level 4 bordering **Level 5** for response to task.

A very clear and thoughtful response to Sheila which engages with her as a character. There is focus on some parts of the task but doesn't deal with why she changes, and therefore doesn't really address context in a thorough way.

High Level 4

Level 4

SPaG=3

Now choose one of the practice question you've planned and write a full response.
You have 35 minutes to write and 5 minutes to SPAG check.

How confident do you feel about An Inspector Calls?

	R	A	G	When am I going to revise this? Do I need to ask for help from somewhere?
The storyline: the key events of each act				
The timeline of Eva Smith				
Sheila Birling: who she is, what she does to Eva, how she feels about it, what she represents				
Eric Birling: who she is, what she does to Eva, how she feels about it, what she represents				
Arthur Birling: who she is, what she does to Eva, how she feels about it, what she represents				
Sybil Birling: who she is, what she does to Eva, how she feels about it, what she represents				
Gerald Croft: who she is, what she does to Eva, how she feels about it, what she represents				
Eva Smith: who she is, what she does to Eva, how she feels about it, what she represents				

Inspector Goole: who she is, what she does to Eva, how she feels about it, what she represents				
The theme of social responsibility and how it's explored				
The theme of lies / deceit and how it's explored				
The theme of gender and how it's explored				
The theme of age and how it's explored				
The theme of social class and how it's explained				
Historical context (the influence of its Edwardian setting and the fact it was written in 1945)				
Priestley's intentions: why he wrote the play and what he wanted to achieve by it				